

Cyclospora Infection (Cyclosporiasis)

What is Cyclospora?

Cyclospora is a microscopic parasite that can affect the intestinal tract and cause diarrhea. It is an uncommon disease in the United States and is occasionally associated with foreign travel.

Who gets Cyclospora?

Cyclospora infections can occur in people of all ages.

How is Cyclospora spread?

Cyclospora is spread by eating or drinking contaminated food or water. Person-to-person spread is unlikely. Outbreaks in the United States have been associated with imported raspberries and with other fresh produce. Although the route of transmission is unclear, animals may play some role in transmission.

What are the symptoms of Cyclospora?

Watery diarrhea is the most common symptom. It may last a few days to a month or longer. Symptoms may subside and then relapse. Other symptoms may include loss of appetite, weight loss, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting and fatigue.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

The incubation period is approximately one week after consuming contaminated food or water.

How is it diagnosed?

A stool test performed at a laboratory is needed to make the diagnosis. The immature stage of the Cyclospora parasite (oocyst) can be identified using specialized laboratory methods. Routine stool tests may fail to detect this parasite so health care providers must specifically request the laboratory test for Cyclospora when this infection is suspected in a patient.

How is it treated?

The recommended treatment involves a combination antibiotic called trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole, also known as Bactrim or Septra.

What can be done to minimize the spread of Cyclospora?

Avoid water or food that may be contaminated with stool or feces. Thoroughly wash fruits and vegetables.

Revised: May 2004